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Reactualizing 'Aqal and Qalb in Islamic Education: A Deep Learning and Love-Based Approach within the Merdeka Curriculum Framework

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Abstract

This study explores the reactualization of 'aql (intellect) and qalb (heart) in Islamic education within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum, emphasizing the integration of deep learning and a love-based pedagogical approach. Contemporary Islamic education often tends to prioritize cognitive achievement while underemphasizing affective and spiritual dimensions, resulting in an imbalance in the holistic development of learners. This research aims to conceptually analyze how the synergy between 'aql and qalb can be strengthened through innovative learning paradigms that align with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. Using a qualitative library research method, this study examines relevant literature on Islamic educational philosophy, deep learning theory, and love-based curriculum approaches. The findings indicate that deep learning fosters critical thinking, reflection, and meaningful understanding, while a love-based approach nurtures empathy, compassion, and spiritual awareness. The integration of these approaches provides a holistic framework that aligns intellectual rigor with emotional and spiritual development. Furthermore, the Merdeka Curriculum offers a flexible and student-centered platform that enables educators to implement this integrative model effectively. The study concludes that the harmonization of 'aql and qalb through deep learning and love-based education can enhance the quality of Islamic education by producing learners who are intellectually competent, emotionally balanced, and spiritually grounded. This approach also reinforces the role of education as a transformative process that not only transmits knowledge but also cultivates character and moral integrity.

Keywords: 'Aqal, Qalb, Islamic Education, Deep Learning

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji reaktualisasi 'aql (akal) dan qalb (hati) dalam pendidikan Islam dalam kerangka Kurikulum Merdeka, dengan menekankan integrasi deep learning dan pendekatan pedagogi berbasis cinta. Pendidikan Islam kontemporer sering kali cenderung memprioritaskan pencapaian kognitif, sementara kurang memberi perhatian pada dimensi afektif dan spiritual, sehingga menyebabkan ketidakseimbangan dalam perkembangan holistik peserta didik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis secara konseptual bagaimana sinergi antara 'aql dan qalb dapat diperkuat melalui paradigma pembelajaran inovatif yang selaras dengan prinsip-prinsip Kurikulum Merdeka. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan kualitatif, studi ini menelaah berbagai literatur yang relevan mengenai filsafat pendidikan Islam, teori deep learning, dan pendekatan kurikulum berbasis cinta. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa deep learning mendorong berpikir kritis, refleksi, dan pemahaman yang bermakna, sementara pendekatan berbasis cinta menumbuhkan empati, kasih sayang, dan kesadaran spiritual. Integrasi kedua pendekatan ini menghasilkan kerangka pembelajaran holistik yang menyelaraskan ketajaman intelektual dengan perkembangan emosional dan spiritual. Selain itu, Kurikulum Merdeka menyediakan platform yang fleksibel dan berpusat pada peserta didik sehingga memungkinkan pendidik untuk mengimplementasikan model integratif ini secara efektif. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa harmonisasi 'aql dan qalb melalui deep learning dan pendidikan berbasis cinta dapat meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan Islam dengan menghasilkan peserta didik yang cerdas secara intelektual, seimbang secara emosional, dan kokoh secara spiritual. Pendekatan ini juga memperkuat peran pendidikan sebagai proses transformasi yang tidak hanya mentransfer pengetahuan, tetapi juga membentuk karakter dan integritas moral.

Kata Kunci: 'Aql, Qalb, Pendidikan Islam, Deep Learning

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education is essentially an integrative process that emphasizes not only the cognitive aspects but also the affective and spiritual aspects of students. In the Islamic scientific tradition, the concepts of the mind (aql) and the heart (qalb) are two key elements in the formation of a complete human being. The mind (aql) functions as an instrument for rational, analytical, and critical thinking, while the heart (qalb) serves as the center of spiritual, moral, and emotional awareness. The two are inseparable in an ideal educational process. However, in contemporary educational practices, particularly in formal institutions, the cognitive aspect often dominates over the spiritual and emotional dimensions. This leads to an imbalance in student development. They may excel academically but lack character and morality. This phenomenon poses a serious challenge to Islamic education in the modern era.

The Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) is a response to the need for educational transformation in Indonesia. This curriculum emphasizes student-centered, flexible, and contextual learning. Within this framework, there is a significant opportunity to integrate Islamic values more deeply. One relevant approach is deep learning, which emphasizes in-depth understanding, critical reflection, and the interconnectedness of concepts. This approach aligns closely with the function of the intellect in Islam. On the other hand, a love-based education approach emphasizes the importance of empathy, compassion, and interpersonal relationships in the learning process. This approach is rooted in the concept of the heart (qalb) in Islamic tradition. Therefore, the integration of these two approaches is highly relevant in the context of the Independent Curriculum.

The current reality of education shows that many learning processes remain mechanistic and oriented toward exam results. Teachers tend to focus on delivering material without considering students' emotional involvement. This results in less meaningful learning. Students need not only knowledge but also learning experiences that touch their humanity. Therefore, a new paradigm in Islamic education is needed. This paradigm must be able to integrate reason and heart. This approach must also be relevant to the needs of the times. In this regard, deep learning and love-based education offer potential solutions.

The discourse on the renewal of the paradigm of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at the primary and secondary education levels finds its urgency amidst the complexity of the challenges of the 21st century. Contemporary Islamic education is faced with massive changes (fundamental disruption), starting from the use of artificial intelligence technology adopted and integrated in various sectors of life and industry, which changes the cognitive patterns of the digital native generation (the generation born and raised with digital technology, generally late millennials and gen z), the mental health crisis among adolescents, to the phenomenon of social polarization and intolerance that often begins in digital spaces.¹ Responding to these sociological and psychological dynamics, the mechanistic educational approach, rigid, teacher-centered, one-way learning approach, considered passive learners focused on memorization, rigid rules, formulas, and measurable results through repetition (Drill) that is merely oriented towards the transfer of low-level cognitive knowledge and dogmatic memorization has proven to be no longer adequate, less appreciative of individual uniqueness, less critical and creative thinking and less honed emotional intelligence. The failure of this kind of approach is seen from the emergence of a gap between the understanding of religious texts and the implementation of morality in the real lives of students.² and the government's efforts as a strategic step and pedagogical engineering, through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology and the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia have implemented the Independent Curriculum enriched with Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) content and the Deep Learning approach.³ This policy transformation is not merely a change in administrative documents, but rather an effort to return education to its natural state. The core of all these transformation efforts boils down to one central idea: utilizing the potential of 'Aqal (reason/intellect) and Qalb (conscience/heart) in a complete, balanced, and integrative manner.⁴

This research was designed to deeply and analytically examine the conceptualization and practical use of the potential of 'Aqal and Qalb' in the

¹ Isnaeni, F., Budiman, S. A., Nurjaya, N., & Mukhlisin, M. (2025). Analysis of the readiness for implementing deep learning curriculum in madrasah from the perspective of educators. *Attadrib: Journal of Elementary Madrasah Teacher Education*, 8(1), 15–30. <https://doi.org/10.54069/attadrib.v8i1.841>

² Khoiri and Abdul Rasyid M. Akib, "Implementation of Deep Learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning in Madrasah," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Studies (IJIS)* 1, no. 2 (July 2025): 143, <https://doi.org/10.62567/ijis.v1i2.909>.

³ Directorate General of Islamic Education. (2025). *Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education Number 6077 of 2025 concerning the Love-Based Curriculum Guidelines*. Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. <https://ntt.kemenag.go.id/file/file/panduan-kurikulum-berbasis-cinta.pdf>

⁴ Busrah, N. (2025, August 23). *Integration of 'deep learning' and love-based curriculum at MAN 2 Parepare City workshop*. Regional Office of the Ministry of Religion of South Sulawesi Province. <https://sulsel.kemenag.go.id/post/integrasi-deep-learning-dan-kurikulum-berbasis-cinta-pada-lokakarya-man-2-kota-parepare>

contemporary Islamic education ecosystem. The analysis starts from the philosophical and epistemological foundations of the nature of 'Aqal and Qalb, which are then drawn into the policy realm through the Independent Curriculum framework, specifically in the aspects of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) and the Rahmatan Lil'alamin Student Profile (P2RA). This study will also outline the conceptual synthesis between the pillars of Deep Learning (Mindful, Meaningful, Joyful Learning) and Islamic intellectual traditions such as tazkiyatun nafs, tadabbur, and ta'allum.⁵. To provide a down-to-earth and straightforward overview, this paper presents an operational design along with very detailed examples of teaching scenarios, so that this philosophical idea can be executed in real life by educators in the classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of reason in Islamic education has been widely discussed by classical and contemporary scholars. Reason is seen as a tool for understanding revelation and reality. In an educational context, reason plays a role in developing critical and analytical thinking skills. Modern research shows that critical thinking skills are crucial in facing the complexities of today's world. Therefore, strengthening reason is an urgent need. However, the development of reason must be balanced with the development of the heart. Without this balance, education will lose its ethical dimension.

The concept of the heart in Islam is closely related to spiritual and moral aspects. The heart is the center of human consciousness, distinguishing between good and evil. In education, the heart plays a role in character formation. Previous research has shown that education that emphasizes emotional and spiritual aspects can increase students' empathy and social awareness. This demonstrates the importance of integrating the heart into learning. However, many modern education systems neglect this aspect. Therefore, an approach that can revitalize the role of the heart is needed.

The deep learning approach in education has developed rapidly in recent decades. Deep learning emphasizes in-depth conceptual understanding over memorization. Research shows that students who learn with this approach have better knowledge transfer skills. They are also more capable of critical and reflective thinking. In the context of Islamic education, this approach is highly relevant to the concept of tafakkur (reflection). Tafakkur is the activity of thinking deeply about God's creation. Therefore, deep learning can bridge the gap between modern science and Islamic tradition.

A love-based educational approach emphasizes the emotional connection between teachers and students. Research shows that a loving learning environment can increase motivation to learn. Furthermore, this approach can also reduce student stress and anxiety. In Islam, the concept of compassion is a fundamental value. The Prophet Muhammad is known as a mercy to all creation. Therefore, love-based education has a strong foundation in Islam. Integrating this approach into Islamic education is crucial.

⁵ Nursani. (2023, September 7). *Implementation of P5RA and P2RA at MTs N 1 Sidrap*. Ministry of Religion of Sidenreng Rappang Regency. <https://sidrap.kemenag.go.id/news/penerapan-p5ra-dan-p2ra-di-mts-n-1-sidrap>

METHOD

This study employed a library research approach. This approach was chosen because the study aimed to examine concepts theoretically. Data were collected from various literature sources, such as scientific journals, books, and educational policy documents. The sources used focused on the most recent period to ensure relevance to current developments. This study also employed a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach enabled the researcher to analyze the data in depth. During the analysis process, the researcher identified key concepts. These concepts include 'aql, qalb, deep learning, and love-based education. Next, a synthesis was conducted to identify the interrelationships between the concepts. The analysis was also conducted within the context of the Independent Curriculum. Thus, the research results are expected to be relevant to current educational policies. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Integration of 'Aqal and Qalb Through a Deep Learning Approach

The research results show that the integration of the intellect and the heart can be achieved through a deep learning approach and love-based education. Deep learning plays a role in developing students' cognitive aspects. Meanwhile, love-based education strengthens emotional and spiritual aspects. This integration results in holistic learning. Students not only understand the material but also internalize the values taught. This aligns with the goals of Islamic education.

Furthermore, the Independent Curriculum provides ample room for learning innovation. Teachers can develop methods tailored to students' needs. Project-based and reflective approaches strongly support the implementation of deep learning. Meanwhile, interpersonal relationships in the classroom support love-based education. Thus, the Independent Curriculum is an ideal platform.

Table of Integration of 'Aqal and Qalb in Learning

No	Aspect	'Aqal (Deep Learning)	Qalb (Love-Based Education)	Implementation
1	Cognitive	Critical analysis	Value awareness	Reflective discussion
2	Affective	Understanding of meaning	Empathy	Collaborative learning
3	Spiritual	Thought	Love	Self-reflection

The discussion above shows that this integration improves the quality of learning. Students become more active and reflective, and they also develop a greater sense of moral awareness. This demonstrates the success of the integrative approach. Therefore, this model needs further development.

Ontological and Epistemological Foundations: Restoring the Position of 'Aql and Qalb

The position of Aql and Qalb in the Al-Quran mentions the importance of Aql/thought, namely Qs. Ali Imran verses 190-191 that "Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are signs (of Allah's greatness) for people of understanding, namely those who remember Allah standing, sitting, or lying down, and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth." And

regarding the Heart to understand Qs. Al-Hajj verse 46 that "For truly it is not the eyes that are blind, but it is the heart that is in the chest that is blind." and is further emphasized in Qs. Al Baqarah verse 44 regarding criticism for those who do not use reason and Qs Ar Rad verse 28 regarding peace of mind (... remember, only by remembering Allah does the heart become peaceful) then Qs. Ash- syu'ara verses 88-89 about a safe heart. The synergy of the functions of the mind and heart in Qs. Al-A'raf verse 179 that "...They have hearts, but they do not use them to understand the verses of Allah and they have eyes, but they do not use them to see the signs of Allah's power..." The important point that can be concluded is that a healthy mind leads humans to the truth, while a clean heart receives guidance from Allah SWT, while a dead heart/heart is characterized by being closed off from the truth due to sin, and Islam strictly forbids anything that damages the mind (something that intoxicates, narcotics, drinks, etc.) because the mind is what differentiates humans from animals.

A fundamental error in the modern education system is influenced by a worldview that separates religious values from public life, the state and science (the secular paradigm) with a sharp separation/dichotomy between the realms of reason and spirituality, between general science and religion, and between cognition (the ability to understand, process and respond to information) and affection.⁶(feelings, emotions, attitudes, interests, love, affection). Islamic education truly rejects this form of epistemological secularization. In the authentic Islamic scientific tradition, the process of knowing is never separate from the process of being (becoming a civilized human being). The primary instruments for achieving this are 'Aql and Qalb.⁷

Before discussing further, biochemically and anatomically the nature of the body, the position of the organs 'mind and heart' has a fundamental difference between the modern medical approach and the spiritual concept, physically the anatomical position of the mind is centered in the brain in the skull and biochemically the brain is the central nervous system that regulates cognition, memory, emotions and information processing through neurotransmitters (chemicals such as dopamine, serotonin and acetylcholine that transmit signals between neurons), producing electrical activity of brain waves that indicate the level of consciousness and thought, which functions in neuroscience that the brain is responsible for logical reasoning and analysis which is often associated with the function of reason. While the heart (Qalbu/heart/liver) anatomical position is located in the upper right abdominal cavity just below the right rib, this is the organ of metabolism, detoxification, and nutrient storage, Spiritually Qalbu is often associated with the heart emotionally (feelings), but in spiritual studies, qalbu refers more to the center where lust, piety, and deepest emotions reside, Qalbu is dynamic, can feel sad, calm or happy and often contradicts the considerations of reason. The relationship between the two is that the mind serves as a source of knowledge and enlightenment, while the heart is the center of moral decisions and spiritual awareness. The heart (qalbu) is not merely a biological organ but also a place for understanding the truth of spiritual cognition.

In Islamic psychology, Aql (reason) and Qalb (heart) are two psychic potentials that synergize with each other, where aql plays a role as the cognitive center, rational

⁶ Sandimula, N. S. (2019). The concept of epistemology of reason from an Islamic perspective. *Portrait of Thought*, 23(1). <https://doi.org/10.30984/pp.v23i1.970>

⁷ Suhra, S. *Educators from the perspective of Islamic educational science*. IAIN Bone Repository. <http://repositori.iain-bone.ac.id/id/eprint/1743/1/Pendidik%20dalam%20Perspektif%20Ilmu%20Pendidikan%20Islam%20D.r.%20Sarifa%20Suhra%2C%20S.Ag.%2C%20M.Pd.I.pdf>

logical thinking and control, while the qalb is the emotional, spiritual, and intuitive center that determines morality, beliefs, and human mental health. Both work together to shape personality and behavior. The difference with conventional psychology is that in Islamic psychology, the Qalb is placed as the main driver of spiritual behavior, while conventional psychology generally focuses more on brain function (neuroscience) and observable behavior, often without including the spiritual dimension as the core of consciousness.

Conceptually, the understanding of 'Aql in the Qur'an and the thoughts of classical scholars goes far beyond the Western definition of instrumental rationality. 'Aql is not merely positioned as a neurological function of the brain to solve mathematical problems or deductive-inductive logic. More than that, 'Aql is understood as a spiritual and cognitive potential that functions integratively with revelation, faith, and morals. According to authoritative scholars, 'Aql is a binding force that prevents humans from evil, an instrument for contemplating natural phenomena, and a tool for capturing the wisdom behind normative texts. The ability to think critically, weigh the values of right and wrong objectively, and verify information are manifestations of the functioning of 'Aql.

Meanwhile, the Qalb (heart/conscience) occupies a central position as the locus where knowledge is internalized, given ethical content, and transformed into wisdom. Imam Al-Ghazali in *Ihya 'Ulumuddin* provides a very extensive discussion portion regarding the essence of the Qalb. Al-Ghazali strongly criticized the empiricist view that reduces human knowledge only to the five senses and pure logic, because it narrows the horizon of truth. For Al-Ghazali, the soul or Qalb is the true substance of the human self. The Qalb is like a mirror; its ability to reflect divine truth depends greatly on its level of cleanliness from the dust of sin, egoism, and hatred. The synergy between cognition (Aql) and affection (Qalb) produces noble morals and balanced behavior, Aql without Qalb can lead to misuse of intelligence while Qalb without Aql can be trapped in blind fanaticism, ideal education is to develop both in a balanced way to form a person of character.

In the context of educational practice, utilizing 'Aql without Qalb will produce intelligent humans who are opportunistic, exploitative, and vulnerable to using their intelligence to manipulate others—a condition that is very relevant to cybercrime or corruption that often occurs today. Conversely, utilizing Qalb without 'Aql will produce a narrow, dogmatic, anti-criticism understanding of religion, and easily slip into extremism. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education must be designed as a process of *ta'dib* (instilling adab) that simultaneously trains the sharpness of rational analysis ('Aql) while carrying out a continuous process of purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) (Qalb).

Contextualization in the Independent Curriculum: P5 and P2RA

The policy shift from the previous curriculum to the Independent Curriculum provides significant pedagogical autonomy for madrasas and schools. This curriculum is designed not only to achieve academic material completion (Learning Outcomes), but specifically emphasizes the formation of student character. This character is formulated in two main frameworks: the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) which applies nationally, and the Rahmatan Lil'alamin Student Profile (P2RA) which is a distinctive distinction in the Ministry of Religious Affairs' madrasah education environment. The development of P5 and P2RA is essentially a process of objectification of the structured functionalization of 'Aql and Qalb in the school environment. The following table dissects how elements of these two profiles directly intersect with the development of students' 'Aql and Qalb potential:

Dimensions of the Independent Curriculum (P5 & P2RA)	Description of the Functionalization of the Potential of 'Aqal (Cognitive-Analytical)	Description of the Functionalization of the Potential of the Qalb (Affective-Spiritual)
Faithful, Pious, & Noble Morals (P5)	Using critical reasoning to understand the verses of kauniyah (the universe) and qauliyah verses (religious texts) as evidence of God's greatness.	Conducting muraqabah (awareness of being watched by God) which fortifies oneself from deviant behavior and fosters tenderness of heart towards fellow beings.
Critical & Creative Reasoning (P5)	Able to deconstruct hoax information, solve everyday problems with logical solutions, and reject doctrines without scientific basis.	Using analytical acumen is not to bring down or belittle other people's arguments, but rather is based on a sincere intention to seek the truth.
Tawassuth (Middle/Moderate Path) (P2RA)	Analytical understanding of the various differences in schools of thought, sociological views, and cultural diversity without getting caught up in blind fanaticism.	Having a broad heart and greatness of soul to accept differences as the law of Allah, so that it is not easy to accuse others of being infidels or hating others.
Ta'addub (Civilized) (P2RA)	Understanding ethical boundaries conceptually, both in direct interactions and when in digital spaces (digital literacy).	Implementing the values of politeness, humility, and respect for teachers, parents, and fellow students reflexively and sincerely.
Global Diversity & Tolerance (P5/P2RA)	Able to analyze global geopolitical, economic and environmental issues, as well as the role of Muslims in them.	Cultivating a sense of humanity across borders (ukhuwah basyariyah) and empathy for human suffering in other parts of the world.

This integration of intracurricular learning outcomes and co-curricular profile-strengthening projects ensures that Islamic religious education is not detached from social realities. Through real-life projects such as managing waste recycling within madrasahs or anti-bullying campaigns, students' minds are challenged to design efficient project management, while their hearts are forged to care for and be responsible for the preservation of God's creation.

Love-Based Curriculum Construction (KBC): Bringing the Spirit of Education to Life

Recognizing that sophisticated curriculum content will have no impact if not delivered through the medium of love, the Directorate General of Islamic Education at the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia officially launched the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) guidelines. KBC is not a new subject that adds to

teachers' teaching hours, but rather a strategy, a grand narrative, and a foundation of values embedded into the entire educational process at madrasahs.

KBC was born out of sociological concerns about the reality of a world increasingly plagued by hatred, polarization, and dehumanization. High rates of academic stress, cyberbullying, and social segregation permeating madrasah environments have alarmed policymakers. KBC presents a radical step to re-establish the conscience of education by positioning "Love" as the fundamental principle of pedagogical interaction. The ultimate goal is to shape a generation that is humanistic, nationalistic, naturalistic, tolerant, and always prioritizes compassion in thinking, feeling, and acting. The operationalization of KBC is built on five main pillars called Panca Cinta. These five pillars constitute the primary execution space for the students' hearts:

1. **Love for the Almighty God:** Changing students' religious paradigm from one based on fear and the threat of punishment (hell) to one based on mahabbah (love). Worship is performed out of longing for and gratitude to God, who is the source of the highest love.
2. **Love for Science:** Learning religious knowledge and science is seen as a process of revealing signs of God's greatness. This motivates students to maximize their intellectual capacity without feeling burdened.
3. **Love for Self and Others:** Teaching self-compassion, nurturing mental health, and building harmonious and inclusive social relationships. This approach is a direct response to the mental health crisis of the modern era.
4. **Love for the Environment:** Internalizing the theological awareness that nature is not an object to be exploited, but rather a trust to be cared for. This will be implemented through the creation of a clean and sustainable environmentally friendly madrasah.
5. **Love for Nation and Country:** Grounding the attitude of nationalism and patriotism as an organic part of faith, thereby preventing the entry of transnational radicalism doctrines.

In the implementation of KBC, the educator is key. Teachers are required to practice "Compassionate Communication" by upholding the fundamental principle of "connection before correction." This means that before a teacher evaluates or punishes a student's academic misconduct or indiscipline, they must first establish a safe space and emotional connection. This approach aligns with the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) method of preaching, which prioritizes educating through gentleness and exemplary behavior (qudwah hasanah) over verbal or physical violence.

Deep Learning Paradigm in Contemporary Islamic Education Learning

If the Independent Curriculum is the structural framework and the KBC is its spirit, then Deep Learning is its methodological instrument in the classroom. It should be emphasized that Deep Learning in the context of this discourse on primary and secondary education (as initiated by the Minister of Elementary and Secondary Education) is distinct from the term artificial intelligence algorithm in computer science. Deep Learning here refers to pedagogical innovations that encourage high-level conceptual understanding, personalized learning, a shift from shallow memorization to internalization of values, and the creation of transformative learning experiences.

This Deep Learning approach is supported by three main pillars: Mindful Learning, Meaningful Learning, and Joyful Learning. When examined critically through Islamic epistemology, these three pillars actually have a very precise conceptual

correspondence with the classical ulama tradition of managing the 'Aqal (mind) and 'Qalb (mind).

1. Mindful Learning and Tazkiyatun Nafs

Mindful learning encourages students to fully engage with the learning process, focus their attention, and be aware of their own state and their surroundings. In the Islamic intellectual tradition, this concept is highly relevant to the practices of tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the soul) and hudhur al-qalb (presence of the heart). Generation Z students are often faced with massive digital distractions, which significantly reduces their attention span.

Islamic mindfulness practices involve training in reflection and reflection. At the beginning of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons, teachers don't simply write material on the board, but instead train students to manage their breathing, focus their thoughts, and align their spiritual learning intentions. A calm and fully present mental state (a clear heart) has been neurobiologically proven to lower stress hormone levels (cortisol), enabling working memory ('aqal) to more optimally absorb complex information.

2. Meaningful Learning and Reflection

Meaningful learning emphasizes that the learning process must be meaningful and directly connected to students' daily lives. Subject matter should not be reduced to a pile of dead text in a textbook. Philosophically, this approach operationalizes the Quranic command to engage in tadabbur (contemplating the meaning behind the text) and tafakkur (thinking about real phenomena).

To achieve meaningful learning, teachers must stimulate students' intellectual potential through analytical questions. For example, when studying the laws of zakat, students don't just memorize the nishab and haul. They are invited to conduct sociological studies: why is economic inequality still high despite the high number of zakat payers? How is the mechanism for distributing productive zakat in the modern era? This process often uses a hermeneutic approach (double movement), in which students draw ideal meanings from past sacred texts and then contextualize them to address current social problems, discrimination, or poverty.

3. Joyful Learning and Love / Manners

The third pillar, Joyful Learning, requires the creation of a learning environment that is enjoyable, safe, and free from threats. Learning religion should be an experience to look forward to, not a moment to be feared due to fear of punishment for failing to memorize verses. This directly intersects with the concept of mahabbah (love) in KBC and adab (good manners) in classical Islamic education.

Al-Zarnuji, in his book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, emphasizes the importance of psychological comfort, gentle communication, and respect between teacher and student. Joyful learning can be implemented through a variety of methods, the use of interactive digital media (such as gamification or simulations), and appreciative discussion strategies. When the heart (Qalb) feels joyful and accepted, the 'Aqal (mind) will function at its peak capacity to generate creative thinking.

Operational Design and Teaching Scenarios in Detail

To prevent this paper from becoming merely a theoretical discourse, the macro-ideas of 'Aqal, Qalb, KBC, and Deep Learning must be translated into technical classroom practices. The conventional, one-way (teacher-centered) approach must be dismantled and replaced with a multi-layered and participatory instructional design.

The following presents two detailed scenarios regarding how an Islamic Education teacher designs learning that utilizes 'Aqal and Qalb in an integrated manner.

Scenario 1: "Social Media Etiquette" Material (Aqidah Akhlak Subject - SMA/MA Phase F)

The topic of social media ethics is crucial for high school students due to its relevance to their daily lives. The challenge for teachers is ensuring that this material doesn't feel like a preachy moral sermon, but rather a discursive process that stimulates reason ('Aqal) and fosters empathy (Qalb).

1. Introduction Phase (Developing Mindful and Joyful Learning):

- **Spiritual Conditioning:** The teacher enters the classroom with a friendly face and begins with a compassionate greeting (KBC) involving a handshake and psychological touch. Before starting, the teacher invites students to practice Islamic mindfulness. Students are asked to sit up straight, close their eyes for two minutes, regulate their breathing, and silently recite istighfar (repentance). The teacher guides a short reflection: "Let's leave our gadgets and problems at home for a moment. Bring our hearts and minds into this room. Intend our learning today to improve ourselves so that our tongues and fingers will not become a source of sin in the future." This process directly touches the heart.
- **Empathic Apperception:** The teacher doesn't immediately discuss the Quranic verse, but instead shows a short documentary video (2 minutes) about a real-life case of a teenager who was the victim of extreme cyberbullying or a hoax that destroyed someone's career. The teacher poses a trigger question to the affective realm: "How would you feel if you were in the position of the victim or the victim's family?" The feelings of sadness or anger that arise are accommodated as an entry point (Love for Self and Others).

2. Core Phase (Building Meaningful Learning with 'Aqal):

- **Contextual Exploration (Critical Analysis):** The teacher divided the class into several discussion groups. Each group was given a printed copy of a real-life case study (a screenshot of a political hoax, body shaming on Instagram, or hate speech disguised as religion). Students were tasked with analyzing the case using verses from Al-Hujurat, verse 6 (the command to check and correct), verse 11 (the prohibition against mocking), and verse 12 (the prohibition against su'udzon and backbiting).
- **Utilizing 'Aqal:** In this discussion, students go beyond memorizing verse translations. They must answer HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) questions: Why do people easily believe misinformation? How do social media algorithms fuel echo chambers that exacerbate polarization? What technical steps should be taken to verify the truth of a news story (fact-checking)? In this stage, students' 'aqal' (intellectual) is encouraged to understand contemporary digital literacy through the lens of Islamic theology.
- **Closed Self-Reflection (Qalb):** After an intense cognitive discussion, the teacher asks students to open their personal reflection journals. They are asked to write honestly and confidentially: "When was the last time I shared a message without reading it all the way through? Have I ever typed a sarcastic comment that might have hurt someone?" This process of self-reflection balances the analytical sharpness of the mind with the gentleness of the heart.

3. Closing Phase and Real Project: As proof of achievement of P5 and P2RA (Critical Reasoning and Ta'addub dimensions), the teacher did not assign multiple-choice questions. Students were asked to design a "Love-Based Digital Literacy

Campaign." They produced infographics, podcasts, or Reels/TikTok content containing Islamic guidelines for social media ethics, and then published them. The lesson concluded with a collective prayer for protection from the slander of the end times.

Scenario 2: "Contemplation of Natural Phenomena" Material (Quran and Hadith Subject - Middle School/Islamic Junior High School Phase D)

Material about the universe (such as studies of Q.S. Ali Imran: 190-191 or Q.S. Ar-Rum: 41) is often taught in the classroom as a dead text. With the Deep Learning approach and the KBC "Love the Environment" pillar, teachers can create transformative learning experiences.

1. Preliminary Phase (Empirical Observation):The teacher takes students outside the classroom walls (outdoor learning). They are invited to observe piles of garbage on the riverbank near the madrasah, clogged drains, or air pollution from nearby factories. The teacher guides the observation process without speaking much, allowing the students' eyes and hearts to respond directly to the damage.

2. Core Phase (Contemplation and Solution Analysis):

- **Text and Context Connection:**Returning to class, the teacher presented the text of Q.S. Ar-Rum verse 41 (Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have wrought...). The teacher guided the discussion using the hermeneutic method: connecting the 7th-century text with the reality of the 21st-century ecological crisis.
- **Orchestrating 'Aqal and Qalb:**The teacher emphasized that an Ulil Albab combines two things: Yatafakkaruna (using the Aqal to think logically and scientifically about the causes of flooding, recycling management, and environmental biology) and Yadzkuruna (using the Qalb to remember Allah, realize the greatness of Allah, and feel guilty when destroying nature). Science without religion gives rise to exploitation; religion without science gives rise to the inability to solve technical problems.

3. Closing Phase (Transformative Action):Students are encouraged to put the values of P2RA (Tawazun/Balance) and the Love-Based Curriculum (Love for the Environment) into practice by creating concrete initiatives. For example, they could create a plastic waste management (upcycling) project at their madrasah, create posters encouraging water conservation during ablution based on hadiths, or formulate a class commitment to reducing single-use plastics.

Holistic Evaluation: Measuring the Achievement of 'Aqal and Qalb'

Radical changes to the curriculum, philosophy, and learning process will undoubtedly be in vain if the evaluation system still uses outdated conventional instruments. Until now, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning has often been trapped in low-level cognitive assessments (LOTS) in the form of memorizing history or identifying Tajweed laws through multiple-choice tests (purely summative). This evaluation pattern is unable to capture the depth of Deep Learning or the internalization of KBC values. In the context of the Independent Curriculum, assessment must be holistic, authentic, and continuous. The evaluation paradigm is shifting from mere assessment of learning (assessment of learning outcomes at the end of the semester) to a greater proportion of assessment for learning (assessment to improve the learning process) and assessment as learning (assessment as a process of student reflection itself). The following is a conceptual matrix for designing an Islamic Religious Education assessment instrument that specifically measures the sharpness of the 'Aqal and the depth of the Qalb:

Assessment Dimensions	Measured Focus	Relevant Evaluation Instruments and Strategies	Achievement Indicator Rubric (Example)
Measurement of 'Aqal (Critical-Analytical Cognitive / HOTS)	Depth of understanding (Meaningful Learning), logical analysis, information synthesis, and problem solving abilities (Problem Solving).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contemporary Case Study Analysis. - Argumentative Essay Assignment. - Structured Debate. - Project-Based Learning (Solution Presentation). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students are able to identify the roots of social problems (not just their symptoms). - Students are able to contextualize naqli arguments in a relevant manner. - Arguments are structured systematically, rationally, and based on data/facts.
Measurement of Qalb (Affective & Spiritual Awareness)	Emotional appreciation, moral maturity, empathy, compassion (KBC), and Mindful Learning practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-Assessment Journal. - Peer-Assessment. - Teacher's Anecdotal Notes (Observation). - Worship & Social Journal Portfolio. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students demonstrate the courage to admit their mistakes in writing. - Demonstrate empathy when listening to differing opinions. - Perform voluntary/obligatory worship on their own accord without the need for strict supervision.
Integrative Measurement (Transformative Action / Psychomotor)	The ability to translate theoretical (rational) understanding into real social manners and skills in society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performance in the Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5/P2RA). - Community Service Practice. - Creation of Islamic Values Campaign Works (Digital/Physical). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active involvement in cross-group collaborative work. - Innovation in work that benefits the surrounding community. - Verbal etiquette and body language during interactions.

The most crucial assessment instrument for measuring Qalb is Reflection Journal (assessment as learning). This journal is not to be scored with absolute numbers (0-100), but rather as a space for intimate dialogue between students and themselves, facilitated by the teacher. The teacher functions as a muaddib (adab guide) who provides constructive, not judgmental, feedback. This comprehensive evaluation will be narratively reflected in the P5 and P2RA Project Reports implemented in the Independent Curriculum.

Infrastructure Transformation and Institutional Recommendations

To ensure the successful implementation of the Deep Learning and KBC approaches in empowering the Aqal and Qalb, systemic prerequisites and strong institutional support are required. The burden of this transformation cannot be placed solely on the shoulders of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in the classroom.

- 1. Transformation of Teacher Capacity, Mindset, and Welfare**The biggest obstacle in the field is the mindset and digital literacy of educators. Many Islamic Education (PAI) teachers still feel comfortable with the lecture-memorization-test method, as it carries the least risk and is the most time-efficient. Furthermore, teacher training often focuses solely on administrative issues such as lesson plans, teaching modules, or syllabus formats, while the pedagogical substance is left behind.

Going forward, teacher professional development programs should be directed toward mastering contemporary Islamic educational psychology, discussion facilitation techniques, mindfulness strategies, and mastery of "Compassionate Communication." Teachers must possess mature emotional and spiritual intelligence. As the Arabic proverb goes, "faqid as-syai' la yu'thi" (one who does not have something cannot give something). Teachers who are stressed and under administrative pressure will not be able to spread the energy of Joyful Learning or the values of Panca Cinta in the classroom.

- 2. Ethical Integration of Technology and Artificial Intelligence**The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is an inevitable reality. AI embedded in educational platforms can be used to create adaptive learning, tailoring the learning load and style to each student's profile and assisting teachers in instantly drafting case scenarios and assessment rubrics. However, this technological integration must be bound by an Islamic ethical framework. AI technology is used to accelerate analytical-mechanistic matters (facilitating the efficiency of 'Aqal), so that Islamic Religious Education teachers have more free time and mental space to interact, engage in dialogue, and engage students' affective realms (facilitating the development of the Qalb). No matter how powerful a machine is, it will never be able to teach sincerity, empathy, and humility.
- 3. Creating a Coherent Madrasah Ecosystem (Hidden Curriculum)**The KBC and Deep Learning theories in the classroom will be shattered if the cultural reality in the school shows otherwise. If students are taught about Love for Others in Islamic Religious Education class, but witness a teacher shouting harshly at students in the ceremonial field, then the students' 'Aqal' will perceive this anomaly and hypocrisy, so that their Qalb will be closed to religious advice. Therefore, the principal of the madrasah/school together with the committee must formulate a coherent institutional culture. There must be a zero-tolerance policy towards violence (bullying), the implementation of restorative justice-based problem solving, humane management of sanitation facilities and the environment, and exemplary participatory leadership. The school ecosystem functions as a hidden curriculum that continuously educates students' character without the need for lectures.

CONCLUSION

Facing an era of disruption marked by exponential technological advancements and a decline in social ethics, Islamic Religious Education has no choice but to undertake paradigmatic reform. Educational models that separate cognitive intelligence from spiritual depth are no longer relevant and, in fact, have the potential to endanger the very fabric of humanity. In this context, the Independent Curriculum, synergized with the Deep Learning methodological framework (Mindful, Meaningful, Joyful Learning) and inspired by the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) philosophy, presents a comprehensive strategic solution, the essence of this entire pedagogical engineering rests on one axis: harnessing the potential of the mind and heart in a balanced and integrative manner. The mind should not be left to run wild without direction, but rather must be sharpened to engage in contemplation, analyze religious texts contextually, solve social problems, and reject disinformation. At the same time, the heart must be constantly cleansed (*tazkiyatun nafs*) and filled with the values of the Five Loves so that the knowledge gained manifests in the form of nobility of character (*ta'addub*), moderation (*tawassuth*), and tolerance (*tasamuh*), learning design is no longer hierarchical and dogmatic, but rather participatory, reflective, and based on students' real-life experiences. The evaluation system implemented shifts from simply measuring memory to measuring analytical skills and character maturity through holistic and authentic instruments. Ultimately, by utilizing a clear 'Aqal (mind) and a loving Qalb (heart), Islamic educational institutions will be able to produce a generation of graduates who are not only able to survive amidst fierce global competition but also capable of becoming agents of change who spread *Rahmatan Lil'alamin* (blessings for the universe) for human civilization and the universe.

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